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Examiner exclusive interview with Greg Lake of Emerson, Lake and Palmer/King Crimson

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Greg Lake on guitar

This is an exclusive Examiner interview with [Greg Lake](#) of [ELP](#) (Emerson, Lake & Palmer) and the band, [King Crimson](#). Greg is a progressive rock artist who has sold over 48 million records in four decades. He has the golden voice of our generation and continues to make music that lives inside all of us.

Greg, can you tell our readers how you got started in music?

Well, I picked up the guitar at 12 yrs old--basically, my mother and father bought it for me for Christmas. I played one at my friends house when I say played it, I just played around with it at my friends house. It just struck me as something I really wanted.

I can tell you how much luck comes into play in which band members you meet. How lucky are you to have met such dynamic band mates?

Luck is a strange word, really, funny enough --I used it in a song. You often hear people say Luck is self made. I think it is to a certain extent, if you work hard on something, you are more likely to be lucky than if you don't. That having been said, I do believe during in my career I have been at the right place at the right time with the right people. I mean the formation of ELP was a good example. The nights that King Crimson were booked to play at the Fillmore West in SF--it was totally unplanned by me or Keith, had that not happened, than we would have never have met. So, I think that good luck in that sense does play a large part in things.

Your work continues to rock the music world, what are you (musically) planning next?

There's a lot of things right now going on, some of which I can tell you and some of which I can't. ELP is reforming and headlining a festival in London, next year in the city. That is one big event taking place---currently Keith Emerson and I are writing together again, with a view to release an album at some point.-not an ELP album, but something different. It's very interesting

coming back together with Keith after so long. The chemistry is still there--we get a tremendous amount of pleasure writing together and playing together again. It's like riding a bicycle--something you never forget.

When you think back about your experiences on the road with ELP on stage, can you describe one single incredible experience you had for our readers?



Almost everyday for about 10 years was extraordinary. ELP's second show was the Isle of Wight -there were something like 250,000 people screaming in front of us. It was certainly an unbelievable spectacle. The California Jam was incredible--over 650,000 people attended that, and ELP headlined that show. For me, every time I get onto a stage it is the same thing. It's always the same thrill in live performance.

What is your favorite tune to perform from ELP? ---and please tell us why!

Songs are like children. They are all special to me--you can't just pick a favorite.

Of course Lucky Man was a special tune with a wonderful story behind it. They have all done different things.

Your ubiquitous love of your material is one of the reasons why these songs have successfully flourished from one generation to the next. Greg, I saw ELP perform in Madison Wisconsin in 1978, with a huge orchestra. I will never forget that show. I stayed in the Concourse Hotel on vacation there, and ELP pulled up to the hotel in Jimmy Buffet's bus. I was stoked. Can you tell our readers how special that experience of performing with the large orchestra was to enjoy?

I'll try. It functions on a lot of levels. That orchestra was one we formed ourselves from young musicians out of Julia rd and places like that-that wasn't the Boston pops, we had our own handpicked orchestra. We had tons of people on the road, there were 6 sound mixers, even our own doctor on the road. It felt like a family! It was like a moving town, we would book entire hotels--it was a vast undertaking--a massive thing to move around. But when it came time to play the show and it all locked up together, it was pretty breathtaking. Some nights were better than others. It was a huge technical and artistic achievement to get it right every time. It was a massive thing to move around--an awesome undertaking with such a large impact. Maybe the night you saw us was one of those perfect nights when everything came together beautifully.

Lucky me! I met Keith in Madison, but I met you once briefly in Los Angeles, and I remember you telling me you were producing some bass players. Are you still producing others or are you focusing on your own music these days?

I haven't done any producing in a while but I do enjoy producing records for others. I would certainly like to though. I enjoy exercising perspective. It's something I like to do---some people don't...I like to see beyond the known--trying to see a possibility about something and constructing it into a reality.

Greg, can you tell our readers about your current web site you are launching?

We just launched it yesterday- the new greglake.com web site. www.greglake.com. The old website needed updating. The old site was over ten years old. I was very fortunate to meet up with some special people. There are very cool features on the site. For example, "Were you there?" is a section where you can add your ELP experience from every show we have ever played around the world. (King Crimson or ELP) You can add your experience to the database and thus refine the ELP live history files. You can read other peoples experience about that show and relive the experience. It is really awesome. The site gives me the ability to communicate with my fans in real time too. There is a museum there.

I heard wind of some digital re-masterings being done. Will those be available through www.greglake.com website?

There are all kinds of products new and updated, remastered and remixed available there. 2010 is going to be an extremely active year for me and a lot of announcement to come. Keep an eye on the www.greglake.com website.

Do you miss going on the road with ELP?

Yes I do, in a way—it's like a lot of things in life--the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. You get so tired that you can't wait to get home, then after a few months, you can't wait to get back out. Life requires a balance of your home life, studio life and concert performance life. You just have to pace yourself.

Let's get more insightful here. What if any, regrets do you have about your life or career?

I've got this little philosophy in life---where, you are a product really, of your genetic inheritance--that is your mother and your father--and you are a product of your own will, your own vision, your own sense of destiny. Then finally, there is the hand of fate of which you have no control of--Life is about what you experience. I am a believer that it is a mix of those things for everybody. In that regard, I cannot have regrets--life is about what you experience--the way you experience it--I don't regret anything--experience is a necessary part of my education--even the bad things were about the experience. They make up who you are...there is no point in looking back---what really matters is the here and now--and the future because that's where we are going.

What a great positive attitude--that attitude is probably one of the reasons why you have been so successful. It keeps me (pardon the pun) "Closer to Believing."

Ah, that is a nice song. Now that could have been one of my favorite songs--that could have been my pick for one of my favorite lyrics. It took us months for me and Pete to write that song. In fact, I just recorded a new version of "Closer to Believing" with a new arrangement. I hope you will get a chance to hear it this year. It was one of those songs that wasn't a big hit but the people with a keen sensitivity or whom have an artistic perspective--they love that one. I also co-wrote "Schizoid Man" with King Crimson-- this was a bizarre and awesome story--- We (King Crimson) recorded the music for the album and it came time for an album cover. Nobody really had any good ideas, so Pete Sinfield said, *"I've got a friend of mine who is an artist at the art college, I'll ask him to do something."*

The next day the guy came over. He had with him, a large brown paper parcel under his arm, like a picture. He dropped it on the floor right at our feet and we stood and gasped, all just froze as we stared at an album cover--we were astonished. It was the screaming face of the man now on the cover of The Court of the Crimson King album and of course, it is the face of the face of the "Schizoid Man"--He had never even heard the song or any of King Crimson's music.

It was something spiritual--in other words it was beyond believability. His name was Barry Goldboro. He was 21 at the time, and the following day he dropped dead from a heart attack, just walking down the street. So Schizoid Man and that album cover became a personal symbol for the band. It was a very personal time for us. He added our chemistry.

How important is chemistry in bands?

Chemistry is very important in bands--some bands have a certain chemistry and that is their power--it is the engine. That is why many super groups don't make it--you can't just put this famous person with another and expect it to gel. You can't just manufacture this famous person with that famous person.



Who are some of your favorites?

I am involved with music all the time. I have heard so much music in my life. Oh, I do have over ten thousand songs in my I-tunes right now so I couldn't pick any favorites right now. I do love Randy Neumann and Judy Collins (Wild Flowers the album) just to name a couple. Music is such a part of my life, I like to do other things too -to be in other worlds. I collect books, do other things.

Do you keep up with your British progressive-rock comrades like Yes, Genesis or Pink Floyd?

We never really socialized much--we never did--we weren't that close. England seems like a really small place but we never really saw each other that much. I did play bass on the last [Who](#) single recently--because I know Roger and Pete. I did a tour a couple years back with Ringo Starr--but I don't do a lot of socializing with musicians. When you have free time, sometimes you just want to get away from things. I go to Dorset, where I was born and I see my old pals

that I grew up with--and some of them were farmers and I kind of morph into a country bumpkin.

Are you saying you are just a country boy at heart?

Yeah, I am really---Wellington boots and all---I love that--the simplicity---a lot of people look at farmers and think they are lovable red faced guys driving around in pick up trucks, but in reality, they are quite sophisticated, sharp businessmen driving around in BMW's. It's a tough life in the country. It's a business to people and a real tough life in the country trying to make a living off of a field.

Greg, this has been a insightful and wonderful opportunity for me and Examiner.com, thank you for the exclusive interview. We have a good sense of who Greg Lake really is, at the turn of the decade in the 21st Century. It has been an honor to interview you, one of my major influences in music, who has written, produced and performed with unparalleled excellence for nearly four decades. You are a major contributor to history and progressive music, with 48 million records sold you have touched the lives of countless individuals. I humbly thank you and encourage you to keep us informed of any new and exciting things going on in your life. All the best of luck in the near future

Well, Timothy, thank you for taking the time to interview me, know you are always welcome to be my guest at any of our shows. Remind your readers that I am doing an on line chat on the greglake.com website on November 15th--fans can chat directly with me.

ELP will be reforming and headlining at the UK's new High Voltage Festival in London on July 25th, 2010. This concert is considered the UK's flagship classic rock event .

Let's talk again soon!

Fantastic! till then...